THE STORE

A narrative based on the life and times in the Marlinton Peoples Store and Supply Company

Written by: James S. Brill

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by

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1930-1940

To everything there is a season. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Prologue: The following narrative is simply based on the impressions of a young boy, as recalled by an elderly gentleman some sixty plus years later and in no way may be an accurate statement. Others involved in the same time period may have different impressions so I bow to their impressions and will not take issue with them. This story is simply about the store and how it influenced my life during this period and into later years. I can never forget it.

Our family called it "the store." To the local towns-people it was "The Peoples Store and Supply", or just simply "Brill's Store." To me it was the place where I was born and grew up and was simply home. The store also provided for me an extensive educational experience both because of the wide variety of merchandise offered and the interesting conversations of customers with the store clerks.

My family lived in an apartment over the main store floor consisting of six bedrooms, a living room, a parlor or music room, a sun parlor, dining room, kitchen, a washroom for clothing, two bathrooms, a screened porch, and an open porch facing the Greenbrier river. The screened porch served as a dining room during the warm summer months. There were two entrances to the apartment, one from the outside by a flight of stairs to the porch, and another inside the main store room by a flight of stairs to a door just off the kitchen. The latter provided access to the store for quick last minute food or cooking needs and also for those of us working in the store. Quite often after sitting down at the dinner table we would discover that we lacked something such as milk or butter and so we could run downstairs and quickly retrieve it. Quite an advantage.

My Father was an avid advocate of education, supporting it in many ways. He served on the Board of Education, encouraged his children in their endeavors, and supplied a supporting environment in the home. He liked books and had a rather extensive library including two sets of encyclopedias and many biographies as well as many of the classics. As a child I would leaf through the encyclopedias looking at the pictures and after learning to read, studying the texts which accompanied them.

The store building itself was located at the northwest corner of the bridge crossing the Greenbrier River on the junction of routes 219 and 39. In those days it was called Seneca Trail and Eighth Street. It was a large rambling structure of frame construction covered on the outside with decorative tin painted gray. The building had grown somewhat haphazardly like "Topsy" from its original shape in about 1915 when it was first built. This was due to two factors, the ideas for new business growth conceived by my father, and the need for more space for the family of six children conceived by my mother. I can recall seeing my father astride a rafter driving a nail while building the last addition to the warerooms in 1930.

In the early days of the store my Father added a grinding flour mill. He called this addition the Marlinton Milling Company. It was at this time that my uncle, Lloyd Davis, and his family moved to Marlinton from Franklin to take employment at the store.

The flour mill didn't remain too long and the space it occupied was converted into ware-room space. That part of the former mill was directly attached to the main store section and was still referred to by my Mother and Uncle Lloyd as the mill, even though there was no mill remaining. A picture of the store in 1920 contained in the 1999 calendar put out by

the former First National Bank of Marlinton shows the mill section attached to the store. The warerooms in this section still showed evidence of the mill in trap doors through the floor and a cupola structure on the roof. These features accommodated the pulleys and belts attached to the mill. The basement had a concrete raised foundation block which held the power plant for the mill. The mill was gone by the time I arrived on the scene.

Around the outside of the building at the height of the first floor ceiling was a tin roof extending from the front door of the store on eighth street around the corner on route 219 to the loading dock. This roof was supported by two inch steel piping which provided a suitable trapeze structure for us boys to play on. We could do pull-ups, skin-the-cat, and arm walk around the building on the pipes. It also provided shelter for customers coming to the store in inclement weather. Included in this arrangement was a certain amount of worry on the part of my Mother that we might fall and be injured.

The building consisted of two stories with a full basement. The first level had the main store room where goods were displayed and business conducted. Behind the main room were a series of warehouse rooms which included a paint and hardware room, a feed room, a truck garage, a flour room, a cement storage room, space for window glass, and roofing of both galvanized tin and roll types. On the second floor were more warerooms for winter and hunting clothing, earthenware such as kraut jars, flower pots, etc., rolls of linoleum, kerosene lamp globes, mattresses and springs, screen doors, rolls of screen wire, an assortment of galvanized pipe, and work tools such as shovels, picks and axes. Some of our customers who worked in the woods would carve out ax handles from hickory or ash wood and trade them in for merchandise. Customers buying these handles were very particular and would examine them

closely before buying. The basements were used for storing fence wire, additional roofing, and other heavy merchandise. The basement under the main store floor had large bins for potatoes bought or bartered from local farmers, provided storage for cow hides also bought from farmers, and housed the furnace and coal bins. In the warerooms there still were a few horse collars, the pads used under the collars, hames, and some harnesses.

The warerooms also held other local products such as chickens, turkeys, eggs, wool in season and for many years furs, such as red and grey foxes, minks, muskrats, raccoons, possums, skunks, weasels, and an occasional wildcat, which were trapped by local residents. My uncle, Lloyd Davis, would grade these furs, giving a grade of number one, two or three, depending on the quality of the fur, color, and density. The raccoon hides were circular in appearance having been slit down the belly and dried on a flat board. The other hides were skinned from the rear somewhat like a sock and then stretched wrong -side- out and dried on a board shaped much like a small ironing board until dry. These were hung up in the wareroom until after the season closed and a buyer came. As you can imagine, these furs provided a distinctive odor to the warerooms.

There was always ample space for play room for me, my youngest sister Lois and our friends. In the summer months we would roller skate on the smooth tongue and grooved pine floors. All of our skates were of the clamp-on type. We only knew of shoe skates from the movies. From the wealth of large wooden boxes in which merchandise was shipped, we would construct playhouses for ourselves and friends. Since the warerooms were not heated this play was restricted to the warmer months. The warerooms and basements also provided a perfect spot for hide-and-seek games. We soon became thoroughly acquainted with all of the various types of merchandise stored throughout the building.

Every summer my cousin Marian Roberts, my Mother's sister Marjorie's daughter would come up from Huntington and spend the summers with us. She was between Lois and me in age and would often play with us in the store and warerooms.

The main store room had a considerably different look to it in 1930 than in later years. There were many glassed in show cases for the assortment of dry-goods, including a tall cabinet with glass doors for men's felt hats. The most popular model was a large black hat with a wide brim and tall crown which was very much in demand by the woodsmen or loggers. Another favorite of the lumberjacks was the cutter boot or high-top leather boot with heavy leather soles studded with hobnails. A good application of shoe grease was a necessary accompaniment to these boots to provide a minimum of water proofing. The store also carried an assortment of sole leather, shoe tacks, metal shoe lasts, and hobnails for repair of these boots. A line of men's and ladies shoes of the Friedman - Shelby brand lined one of the walls. The most popular line of these were known as Red Goose shoes. Available also were tennis shoes of the ankle length type made by Red Ball. These were most popular with the young boys and were worn through the warmer months. They made excellent wading boots for the Greenbrier River and one could easily tell when summer was about over by the number of toes peeping out of the canvas uppers. Many of my boy friends went barefoot most of the time but almost everyone had at least one pair of tennis shoes.

Another wall of shelves carried bolts of cloth of all descriptions with spool cabinets of thread, sewing needles, and needles for the most popular Singer sewing machines. Patterns for ladies dresses were also available. During the depression years the feed companies made their feed sacks out of print cloth which could be used for making dresses and other clothing items.

This was very popular with the farm ladies and they would go into the warerooms and pick out the cloth bags that they wanted.

Tables bore an assortment of men's work pants, denim and wool shirts, dress shirts, overall pants and bib overalls, canvas Duxbak hunting pants, Woolrich pants and coats mainly in bright plaids, red being the most popular, socks, long underwear, and BVD's, men's lightweight underwear of one-piece style.

In the center of this room was a large Burnside potbellied stove. This was a gathering place in the evenings for several locals who came to listen to the radio. The store stayed open in those days until 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and 10:00 p.m. on Saturdays. One of the regulars was Uncle George McCollum, not really an uncle but he was called such by all who knew him. He had been a leader and pilot on many of the log rafts made up of the pine logs cut in the Knapps Creek area and floated to Ronceverte mills in the early part of the century. Some radio programs listened to included the Lowell Thomas news, Amos and Andy, Fibber McGee and Molly, and Lum and Abner. Uncle George smoked corn cob pipes and could fill in lulls in the programs with interesting tales. I remember listening to King Edward the XIII give his abdication speech on this radio in December of 1936. As a boy of eleven I could not quite grasp why a man would give up a throne for the love of a woman. Had I been sixteen I might have better understood.

The grocery section was fronted by a large counter with a glass paneled front in which could be displayed the variety of dried beans, rice, and other dry grocery items. In the early days there was a lack of adequate refrigeration so perishable grocery items were kept to a

minimum. One of the most popular items bought from local farmers was country butter. Luster Shrader made the butter and delivered it once a week. The butter came in one pound packages stamped with a design on the top. As I said it was one of the most popular items carried. Both Mr. and Mrs. Shrader were very kind to me and Mr. Shrader took me to his farm for my first squirrel hunting trip.

Dried beans came in one hundred pound sacks and were loaded into drawers located on the back of the counter. There were usually five kinds of dried beans available, Cranberry, Pinto, Great Northern, Navy, and Lima beans. Coffee also came in large one hundred pound bags made of pitch coated paper to keep it fresh. This would then have to be repacked into brown bags of two, one, and one half pound size. This was one of the jobs that I was allowed to participate in as a boy. I liked this because I could filch a small wad of coffee and put it under my lip like snuff and feel real grown up.. I also liked the smell of the fresh coffee. Coffee sold for about ten cents a pound in those days.

Behind the grocery counter was a wall of shelves for canned goods, paper goods, soaps and various washing powders. Some of the soaps, especially the Octagon brand, and the Borden's canned milk, and certain baking powders had coupons attached to the wrappers which could be redeemed for a variety of products such as dishes, pans, glasses, and an assortment of cloth goods such as towels, washcloths, and dishrags. Some customers would collect these for months and bring them in for exchange. This required counting and labeling the different types of coupons and then mailing them to the companies. The store was allowed a small fee for handling charges which rarely paid for itself, but it was an advertising scheme that sold their products.

In early years there was a track ladder which enabled clerks to reach the high shelves but it was later taken out. To substitute for the ladder a sort of grappling arm on a long handle was used. This consisted of a long handle about six feet long with a set of curved metal fingers on the end which were attached to a rod extending to the bottom with a squeeze handle with which the operator could open and close the fingers thus allowing one to grasp articles and retrieve them from the higher shelves. Needless to say this was an intriguing thing to a small boy and I would often slip up behind one of the store clerks, snare their necks or arms in the fingers of the machine and give them a light pinch and then run.. As you can imagine, I was the only one amused.

On the corner of the store at the intersection of the two main roads were two gasolene tanks. These were of the old variety with a hand pump to fill the glass container at the top of the tank and a hose to fill the car's tank. As I grew older I was allowed to pump the gas for customers. I can recall Model T Fords with their tank under the front seat and Model A Fords with the tank in front of the windshield. There was a bulk oil tank for motor oil.

The floors in the store were of tongue and groove pine flooring and were oiled with penetrating oil periodically to keep down the dust. This would be frowned on by modern fire inspectors.

Next to the bridge at the corner of the store was a small room used as a radio repair shop. The radio repairman was Roy Humphreys who was called Skyjacks by my Father. I knew him by that name and was thrilled with his knowledge of electricity and radio. My Father had latched on to the idea that radio was going to become popular and had established

a trade in radios. The only problem was that this was before rural electrification and most farmers did not have electricity. However battery powered sets were available and so he decided to give it a try. He traveled all over the county with the radios and would take one into a farmer's house, set it up, tune it in to a station and tell the farmer that he would leave it with him for a few days to see if he liked it. This was a clever ruse and most people became so fascinated with these radios that they bought one. On one trip towards Durbin my Dad was returning home at night, came around a curve and ran into a big black horse. This caused some damage to both, and both were equally surprised. I can remember taking one trip with him across Elk mountain to a farm house to try and sell a radio. I don't remember whether the sale was made but the farmer had a big dog. The brand of radios sold was Atwater Kent.

Fresh fruits, other than apples and bananas, were limited to those in season locally. The bananas were imported green and ripened in the store. I remember once when a large tarantula spider was included in the banana box. This created quite a stir among the local people when it was caught and displayed. Dried fruits such as apples, peaches, apricots, and prunes were quite popular and came packed in wooden boxes about two feet long by one foot wide and six inches high. Berries of all kind were brought to the store by local customers and traded for merchandise. These included raspberries, blackberries, huckleberries, plums and cherries. My Aunt Mabel Hudson would make jellies of some of these fruits.

One of my favorite salesman was the Nabisco Cookie man. Cookies were displayed in bulk in boxes about one foot square and ten inches deep with a separate glass door on each box. These were held in place on a rack about three or four boxes high. Customers could select their cookies, put them in a paper bag (commonly called a paper poke) and then hand

them to a clerk for weighing and pricing. Cookies were sold by the pound.

Vinegar and lamp-oil or kerosene were sold by the gallon or portion thereof. The vinegar came in a large wooden barrel which had to be drilled for the bung or spigot attachment and then rolled up on a stand on its side for dispersing. Customers would bring their empty jugs to be filled with vinegar which a clerk would draw from the barrel. Kerosene was stored in a large metal tank with a pump for dispensing it. Again customers provided the containers.

Another couple of seasonal products brought in by customers were shelled-out nut meats and ginseng. The nuts were of several kinds, black walnuts, hickory nuts, and white walnuts or butternuts. These were traded for merchandise and then sold to other customers. The ginseng was most valued as it brought a good price per pound. It was usually brought in paper bags and the clerk would shake it out on the scales being careful to get all little bits, carefully weighed and paid for at the current going price. The store would then resell it to a buyer who would come by periodically.

Also in the grocery section was a variety of tobacco products. There were several kinds of plug chewing tobacco, the most popular being Brown's Mule and Apple. The plug tobacco had tag labels made of thin metal, usually red in color, and were a collector's item for some young people. The Brown's Mule tag was appropriately a mule and the Apple tobacco an apple. There were also packages of chewing tobacco such as Beech Nut and Mail Pouch. The plug tobacco came in a small wooden box and could be purchased by the whole plug about two by four inches or by the partial plug which was cut with a plug tobacco cutter. This cutter had a sharp blade attached to a swivel handle which lowered the blade much like a guillotine. There was an assortment of pipe tobacco in cans and one kind in a paper wrapper called Five Brothers. This was a rather strong tobacco but was a favorite of several of our pipe smoking customers.

Also carried was an assortment of snuffs. Some were dry powdered snuffs in little cans such as Honest and Cherry snuff. The latter was a favorite of the lady snuff customers. Copenhagen was a moist type of snuff and very popular. Cigarettes were never sold in the store but a variety of cigarette type tobaccos was available. Among them were RJR, Bull Durham, and Golden Grain, all of which were in small cloth sacks with a draw string around the openings. These came with a pack of cigarette papers for rolling your own.

Another shelf in this area held a variety of patent medicines. Many of these were purchased from a firm in Phillipi called Dr. Myers Remedies. A sample of medicines carried included Syrup Pepsin, Castoria, nerve medicines, Doanes Little Liver Pills, etc. I ingested a goodly amount of the first two items as the first treatment for any illness was to clear the gastro-intestinal tract. It must have worked for I am still kicking.

All customers were waited on by clerks. They told the clerks what they wanted and the clerks provided it. For those customers wanting delivery of goods most orders were phoned in. The telephone service was owned by the Pocahontas Telephone Company and consisted of mainly wall phones with a crank for contacting the central operator who would ring the phone of the person you desired to talk to. Each customer had a certain ring pattern for their phone. The store's ring was a long and a short ring. The apartment upstairs was three shorts. These rings were initiated by the central operator. One nice advantage of this system was that the central usually knew if a person was not at home or was out of town and would inform you if she knew the whereabouts of the person you wished to talk to. Doctors would usually inform the central operator as to where they might be reached as doctors made house calls at that time.

At each of the counters were rolls of wrapping paper and balls of twine string suspended above the counter. At the grocery counter there also were paper bags commonly called pokes.

Clerks would wrap merchandise and with a flourish grab the string hanging down and tie up the package. They were quite adept at this which astonished me. Within a few years a new development in the form of a machine which contained a roll of paper about one inch wide and five inches around. It had a handle which when pulled extruded the paper which was coated with glue much like an envelope. In the front of the machine was a small tank with water in it and a felt pad over which the paper passed wetting the glue. Quite an advancement.

There were still people who came to town in horse and wagons to shop. One man I can recall was Mr. Charlie Weatherholt from Riverside. There were others but I cannot remember their names. I do know that I learned the lesson that two could live as cheaply as one - a horse and an English Sparrow.

One staple carried by the store was oil cloth. There was a rack with rolls of this material in a variety of colors and designs. It was used primarily as a covering for the kitchen tables in many homes.

At this time many people in town raised their own chickens and many had their own cows. Cows were permitted to roam during the day all over town grazing wherever they could find grass to eat. They would have to be rounded up for milking each evening and penned up. The store bought chickens for sale to local customers and also to be shipped to Baltimore, Maryland. Buyers would come through periodically to pick up chickens for shipment. Trucks would be loaded down with chicken coops filled with chickens clucking and crowing and was quite a sight to see. Customers at the store could buy live chickens or have them dressed and delivered. Live chickens would have their feet tied and put in a paper poke with a hole for the head. Chickens to be dressed would have their heads chopped off, taken to a lady on Greenbrier Hill who dressed them and then delivered. Occasionally the

chickens would get out of their coops in the wareroom and be scattered out. We had a long wire with a bent hook on the end with which to snare the chicken's leg and return it to its coop. This was an exciting adventure for me to help retrieve those chickens. The store carried cracked corn and chicken feed which could be purchased by the pound. The chicken feed was a mixture of cracked corn and wheat.

In the grocery section was the candy counter. It contained mostly stick candy in a variety of flavors and also chocolate drops which were cone shaped about the size of a walnut and consisted of a cream center covered with milk chocolate. It was my father's policy to provide customers who came in to pay their bills with a bag of candy of their choosing. There was a small candy scale to weigh candy purchases sold by the pound. A little later chocolate covered peanuts and candy bars were available. It was a common practice of my sister Lois and I to help ourselves to a handful of chocolate covered peanuts each time we passed the candy counter. They were very habit forming. Behind the candy counter was a soda pop cooler. Tom Mason ran the Coco Cola plant in Marlinton and supplied the soft drinks sold at the store. One special drink was an orange pop called Whistle with the slogan "If you're thirsty just whistle." It had its own special bottle made of white glass with a slender waist and etched orange peel in the glass. I still have one in my possession with the date 1926. There were also other flavors such as cherry, grape, and cream soda.

For years the store bought wool from local farmers and sold it to a buyer from the East coast. The one that I remember was named MacFarland and was from Baltimore. The policy was to pay the farmer the price allowed by the buyer minus a small percentage for the store for handling charges. When a farmer had a load of wool he would notify the store and Emerson

would take the truck and pick it up. The wool had to be repacked at the store in large wool sacks about six feet long and two and a half feet in diameter. This was done by attaching the bag to a large hoop made of pipe and suspending it on a framework about six feet from the floor. A man would get in the sack and fleeces of wool would be tossed in and the man would tromp them down tight until the bag was full. The bag would then be lowered and the top sewn shut with heavy brown string on a large curved needle. These bags would then be stacked upright in a corner of the wareroom until time for shipping. As Ray Viers mentioned in earlier writing about this event, the bags attracted us boys as the openings between bags provided tunnels to play in. On a hot day it wasn't long before we became saturated with the smell of wool. Our Mothers did not particularly like this and suggested that we discontinue this practice. We did until the next opportunity presented itself.

In the late fall many farmers would bring dressed whole hogs to the store to exchange for merchandise. This was particularly fascinating to me for I had little contact with dead animals. Uncle Lloyd would butcher the hogs. He would cut out the tenderloins, cut out the hams and shoulders, and make sausage of the remainder of the meat. The feet and heads were sold to customers for a small price. Uncle Lloyd would then render lard from the fat in a room behind his house and it would be sold by the pound. The hams would be cured into country ham. I loved the taste of fresh tenderloin as well as canned tenderloin. Aunt Mae and Grandma Moore would can the sausage to be later used with buckwheat cakes. The spareribs and backbone were sold to customers. Lard was the principal shortening during this period and made delicious pie crusts as well as fried chicken.

In addition to the fresh pork the store also carried slab cured bacon and salt pork. The clerks would slice the bacon by hand using a large butcher knife if the customers desired it.

The salt pork was kept in a large wooden box and was sold by the pound. There was a large cheese box with glass sides in which was kept Colby style cheese in large rounds and bologna in large rolls. This was also cut by the clerks as requested by the customers. Another item of interest was salt fish, usually cod fish, which came in wooden casks containing salt brine. The fish had to be soaked in plain water to get rid of most of the salt but the end result was very tasty when fried.

My father, Ira D. Brill, died at the early age of forty-four in 1931. Someone had come into the store and reported seeing a flock of Canada geese on the river at the Fairgrounds. My father recruited Skyjacks Humphreys and a man named Emerick, who ran the local bakery, and took off in pursuit of these rare, at that time, birds. They followed them to Kee Eddy below Marlinton and managed to bag seven geese. As I understand, they cleaned them and fed them to the Rotary Club. My father sustained a bite on the eye by something and it became infected by what was probably staphylococcus bacteria. In one week he was dead. There were no wonder drugs such as penicillin or sulfas so Drs. Solter and Yeager treated him to no avail. As was the custom at the time his body was embalmed and brought to the house for the wake. I can recall touching his hand and feeling the stiffness and hardness in it. Many folks came to the house to view the body, among them many black people who were customers of the store and were quite fond of my Father. The funeral was held at the Methodist Church and was filled with people. The large doors between the sanctuary and Sunday school room were raised and even the balcony above was full. About three hundred people were outside with no seating available. He must have been deeply respected by those coming and this made quite an impression upon me.

Needless to say, this was a crisis for the store and the family who lived above it. The lawyer who was Commissioner of Accounts advised my Mother to sell the business and pay off the debts which it owed. Fortunately, my Uncle Lloyd Davis came to the rescue and talked my Mother into taking over the business. She was quite wary of this at the time as she had done little in the way of store work but at his insistence that he would help her learn the business she consented. She successfully ran the store until her death in 1970, putting all of her six children through college and earning the respect and admiration of the other business leaders in the town.

Unfortunately my Mother's sister, Mabel Hudson, lost her husband earlier the same year. I had been sent down to the store when the message arrived that Aunt Mae's husband, Perrow Hudson had died in his sleep. I became aware of this when I heard the terrible wail of despair from Aunt Mae upstairs. This was my first experience with this sort of tragedy. My Mother invited her to stay with us and after my Father's death, she agreed to take care of the household while my Mother took care of running the business. My grandmother, Mrs. Moore, also lived with us and helped share the load. I was the youngest and the only boy and lived with eight women. I managed to overcome this burden by making myself scarce around the house and by enlisting the help of two close buddies, Ray Viers and Carman Sharp, the sons of two of the employees. We spent much of daylight hours in and out of the store playing in the warerooms which were fascinating to us, in riding in the store truck with Emerson Sharp, Carman's dad, and .roaming the hills across the road from the store. The Greenbrier River had a special attraction for us, providing swimming, fishing, and general exploration of its many attractions which had been dumped into it. A popular type of fishing with us was bucket fishing. This consisted of using a large lard bucket which was placed at the end of a large flat rock which was gently hoisted up on its side. Any fish under it would keep swimming back to

the edge of the rock and could be shooed into the bucket with our hand. When the fish entered the bucket it was quickly raised capturing it. We caught a lot of goggle-eyes or rock bass as well as an occasional bass using this method. Sometimes we would uncover a large waterdog which would be accompanied by shrieks and hollers and a mad dash out of its way. The current myth was if they bit you they wouldn't let go until sundown.

Other boyhood chums were the Irvine boys who lived just above the Sharps on 219. They had the unusual attribute of having nick names. I cannot recall their real names but the nick names were Chick, Jubey, Chub, Doodie, Hampy, W.D., Sis, and the oldest was Paul. The girl nearest my age was called Middy, her real name was Elsie Lee. Doodie was crippled but became an excellent musician on the guitar and other string instruments. His brothers used to take him to the Saturday movie matinees in a little wagon as he could not walk. The movie house was located in the Marlin-Sewell Hotel where the present Bank of Marlinton now stands. As I recall the price was ten cents for children and no more than twenty five cents for adults. This included a serial, cartoon, and a double feature movie, usually a cowboy movie and an adventure movie. Quite a bargain. Until I became old enough by my Mother's standards to attend, Carman would go and then relate the stories to me afterwards..

Ray Viers had a sister named June Marie or Junie for short who was younger than us but played in the store at times with us and simply loved the river in the summertime. She would stay in the river all day and would get sunburned as brown as a chestnut. Ray's brother Bobby was born in the mid thirties and Ray came to the house to announce the news. I went up to see the newborn, the first I had ever seen, and was surprised to see a little red infant, so tiny it seemed to me.

One of the fun things for us was riding the truck on its delivery routes. Since many of our customers did not have automobiles the store had a policy of delivering goods to their homes. Orders were filled by the clerks, packed in cardboard boxes and labeled so the truck driver would know where to deliver them. If eggs were ordered the store had wooden boxes with dividers in one dozen and two dozen sizes and the customer would leave a bowl on the kitchen table in which to place the eggs and the boxes were returned for another delivery.

The store delivered everyday at 10:00 a.m. to town customers, in the afternoons, Tuesdays to Woodrow customers, Wednesday to Elk River, and Thursday to Brush Country customers. The roads to Woodrow and the Brush Country were unpaved for many of these early years. Other runs were made as needed. Many of the out of town customers would walk to town in the morning, make their purchases and ride the truck back home. This was quite some sight to see when the truck would be loaded up with groceries, feed, etc. and the customers would be perched on top of the load. Everyone had a good time and our customers enjoyed the outing. Sometimes Emerson would take a gun and shoot groundhogs along the way. This was quite exciting to us young lads.

Practically all of the stores supplies were ordered from traveling salesmen. There were salesmen for hardware, cement, feed and flour, dry goods, processed meats, groceries, shoes, and heavy items like fence wire and roofing. Goods were shipped into Marlinton by rail to the depot and hauled to the store by the store truck. Carload lots of items such as cement, feed, flour and roofing were often shared by several stores to cut shipping costs. Flour came in 24 pound and 96 pound bags. A barrel of flour was 96 pounds and customers often ordered flour by the barrel or portion of a barrel. Now flour comes in 2, 5, and 25 pound packages.

Some of the companies represented by the salesmen were: Watts Ritter in Huntington, Baldwin Supply in Charleston, Bluefield Hardware, Gwinn and General Mills feed and flour, Sherwin Williams paints, Charleston Hardware, Valley Supply, and many others. They would arrive in their cars with large brown cases of merchandise samples to show to the store buyers. It was interesting to see what new products were available. My Mother bought the dry goods, Uncle Lloyd bought the feed, flour and hardware and Mr. Viers bought the grocery goods. One salesman, Mr. Marvin Dunbrack represented the Clifton Forge Grocery Company, later a company in Marlinton and finally a company in Richwood. He was an excellent salesman and later told me how much pride he had in his work. Toward the mid thirties Mother hired Mr. Kyle Curtis, supposedly on a temporary basis to work in the store. He stayed on the job until his death about thirty years later, taking over the job of buying the men's clothing and pricing the dry goods. He had somewhere learned to play the cornet and I recall hearing him play with a town band organized by Mr. Joe Campolio in the late thirties. He had a fine tenor singing voice and sang with quartets at the church and elsewhere.

One of the most interesting salesmen was a man who was adept at ventriloquism. He would make little chicken cheeps appear to come from the drawers or eggs and voices come from strange places. One day while the men were packing wool in the back wareroom with some pickup temporary helpers he came in and asked why were they packing that man in the wool sack. He then threw his voice so that it appeared to come from the wool sack saying, "Let me out. I'm suffocating." One of the temporary helpers became quite scared with the result that it took a great deal of explaining and reassuring to get him to continue. Another salesman that interested me was the Planter's Peanut salesman. He would always bring cards with a

high definition picture of Mr. Peanut and if one would stare at it intently for a period of time and then look up at the sky you could see the retained image of Mr. Peanut. Quite intriguing to a small boy.

My father died when I was six years old so I had little knowledge of his place in the store. Yet, thanks to the wonderful men who worked for him I was able to build a mental picture of him and his dealings with them and the customers. They were very kind to me and I shall always treasure memories of them and their families. I have a few memories of my Father. One was traveling with him to the Slaty Fork School which was being built during his term on the Board of Education. He pointed out the chestnut trees on Elk mountain that were dying from the blight which had infected this species. I also accompanied him to the Black Church on Greenbrier Hill where he spoke. Another time he tried to bribe me to eat an oyster for a quarter but I refused. This was a favorite of his and I have since learned to like them very much. My sisters played basketball in High School and I recall one very snowy day that my Father was taking them to a ball game. They had gathered at the apartment. getting ready to go. Those girls that I remember were my sister Frances, Alice Fortune, Frances Hunter, Marjorie King, and Catherine Bessling. Girls basketball was different in those days with girls rules, six member teams, and half court rules. Basketball was discontinued during the thirties as interscholastic sports but now is a very enthusiastic sport.

The thirties were the years of the Great Depression. My Mother had the difficult job of taking over the store during this period. Money was very tight and the store had issued credit to many customers at the time of my father's death. To the credit of the wonderful people of Pocahontas County practically all of these debts were paid. Many very slowly paid their way out of debt to the store, paying as little as a dollar at a time. Mother also issued credit to many

others who had need and the store served as a dispersal point for Federal commodities supplied by the Federal Government. She echoed the philosophy of my Father who thought that any business should provide service to the community and its customers as well as providing a living for the owners. Charge accounts were of two types, miscellaneous and book accounts. The miscellaneous accounts were for people who did not carry permanent accounts and were filed in a metal accordion like folder alphabetically listed. The book accounts were charge books with the customers names at the top and were stored in a metal open file sloping upwards towards the back so that the names were visible. Each month my Mother and either a stenographer or a member of the family would make out statements and send to the customers, except for those who requested no bill or dun as they referred to it. Four of my oldest sisters were in college during these years and somehow Mother managed to provide for us all. She was a wonderful woman and I cannot recall ever hearing her complain about her life.

In 1930 my Father built a filling station across the street from the store. He hired cousins Reed and Layman Davis as the first employees to run the station. The tanks at the store stayed in place for a few years but were later removed. The station opened on the Fourth of July, 1931. Some of the employees through the years were Forrest Moss, Henry Jackson, Darius Loudermilk, Miff Gilmore, Clyde Vallandingham, Raymond Bowers, Bill Michael, Oliver McPaters,Ted McPaters, Bobby Broyles, Pete Broyles, Bernard Broyles, Lokie Oscar, and several others whose names I cannot recall.

Shortly thereafter my Father bought a new car, a 1931 Buick seven passenger car. In addition to the front and back seats it had folding seats between the others and was longer than a standard car. It had two spare tires mounted on the front fenders and varnished spoke wheels. When loaded with our total family of nine, including my grandmother, it was a sight to see.

When people would stare as we went by my Father would yell, "We've got two more at home." Strangely enough my Mother never learned to drive until after my Father's death. She met the challenge however and Willard Eskridge, Frances' boyfriend taught her to drive and she drove until her death. In 1937 Mother traded in Dad's car for a new seven passenger Buick. This was the car in which Lois and I learned to drive and it was a great vehicle for taking friends to ball games as we could take at least nine and have a great time.

Almost every summer during the thirties a troupe of Gypsies would come through town. During the early years they drove horses and wagons with spare horses roped onto the back of the wagons. They would always stop at the store to buy a few items and the store clerks were always on the alert for some shoplifting which probably occurred as the Gypsies would spread all over the store making it difficult to watch all of them. They knew my Mother and would always spend time talking to her. They were very picturesque in their Gypsy costumes of bright colors including shawls and head coverings. In later years they abandoned the horses in favor of a motley assortment of old touring style cars. When I was small I was always afraid that they might steal me and take me with them. An unwarranted opinion of course.

During the years my Mother's credit remained good with Standard Oil and she was told that she was the last station in the country to be allowed credit on a truck full of gasolene. I worked summers during my high school years at the filling station. A great experience. My father had built a tennis court next to the station and for a number of years this was a gathering place for my sisters and their friends. He had installed lights so that tennis could be played at night. He also had basketball hoops at either end as my sisters played basketball. The court

would be filled at night with young friends of my sisters playing. The state road took part of the tennis court for road development so I never learned to play tennis.

As the thirties rolled on new products became available to the store. I can recall two, probably because of my sisters' influences. One was a new thing called deodorant. The name was Odorono. It came in a small bottle with a brush much like fingernail polish and was red in color. It was brushed on the armpits and allowed to dry. My sisters were much impressed with this new development. Another new product was Kotex or sanitary napkins. Since many of the female customers were rather shy about asking the male clerks for these, my Mother had Mr. Curtis wrap the boxes in plain brown paper and displayed them so that customers could pick them up and bring them to the cash register for payment. In the late thirties other products became available due to the development of packaging techniques and the development of synthetic materials. Nylon hose began to replace the silk hose worn by women and rayon appeared in clothing.

Airplanes were a rare occurrence around Marlinton and if one was heard to approach everyone would rush outside to see it. Usually at the Pocahontas County Fair some pilot would bring in a plane and give rides for a fee. An unusual airplane was the autogyro, an airplane with a rotor like a helicopter and short wings. It was not capable of direct liftoff like the helicopter but could become airborne very quickly. Lindberg had made his historic flight in 1927 and I became very much acquainted with the details. He was a personal hero to me and I very much wished to be like him. I would make a cockpit of cushions from a black leather couch in the sun parlor, put on my flying helmet with goggles and fly the Atlantic for hours. I could picture myself landing in Paris to the rousing cheers of the entire population.

The flight helmet made of imitation leather with ear flaps which could be buttoned under the chin and with goggles with celluloid eye holes was a very popular cap for boys during the winter and was sold by the store. I also remember the Lindberg baby being kidnaped and followed the story very closely. After all he was my hero. My fascination with airplanes carried over into World War II with the result that my buddy Carman and I went to Charleston in 1943 took the Aviation Cadet examination and entered service together. I was 18 years old and Carman was 22 and married at this time. We stayed together for almost a year before separating, Carman to go to pilot training and I to go to Bombardier school. My friend Ray also went to the Air Force a year later.

During the early thirties my cousin Layman Davis also became enamored of airplanes and decided to build his own. He purchased a kit and began assembling it in the upstairs wareroom. I don't think that he ever thought of how he would get it out of there if he finished it. He did finish one wing but gave up on the job. I believe that the wing ended up in the attic of the Ford garage and has long since disappeared. It increased my enthusiasm for airplanes however.

The store had a furnace in the basement for heating the store and for heating water. Above the furnace in the main store room was a large grate about four feet square. Directly above it in the apartment was another grate about two by three feet big. This allowed heat to come into the apartment. This grate was a great place to get dressed on cold wintry mornings. I would often call down to the store and beg Mr. Viers for chewing gum. He would take the long wooden stick used to gauge the amount of gasolene in the tanks, cut a slot in the end of it and insert a stick of gum and then push it up the grate to me. I often would lie next to the grate and listen to the men talking in the store. Mr. Viers also had another talent that astonished me. He could pour out a bucket of eggs into another container without breaking a single one. He

had a knack for the psychology of selling. I remember one time that the store had an over abundance of colored cotton thread which sold for five cents a spool. It was slow in moving so Mr. Viers gathered it all up, put it in a basket, with this label, Special! five spools for twenty-five cents. In about one day the thread was sold.

The sewage system for the town was very simple. Take the sewer line to the nearest stream, either Knapps Creek or the Greenbrier, and empty into it. The garbage system was the same. Many of the homes in Marlinton did not have inside plumbing and had privies out back of the houses. The store was fortunate in having indoor plumbing. Emerson Sharp did not have a bathroom and I recall being up with Carman when he took a bath in a large washtub in his kitchen. This Saturday bath was the common ritual for many at this time.

Food garbage from the apartment was dumped into large buckets, picked up by Parson Goodwyn who lived above the store on route 219 and fed it to his hogs. His wife also did the laundry for the apartment. Parson would pick it up on Monday and deliver it back on Saturday. Some laundry was done in the wash room just off of the screen porch by family members.

One interesting event took place in our bathroom in the apartment. A cousin of ours by the name of Maggie Ruckman used to visit with us occasionally. She was a rather portly individual as was her brother Early with whom she lived. She loved to take a bath in our tub whenever she visited, a luxury she did not have at home. On this occasion, after finishing her bath, she found that she was not able to lift herself out of the tub. Aunt Mabel being the only person upstairs with her was unable to provide the muscle power needed to heft her out of her predicament. As a result Aunt Mabel had to call upon the store men to help solve this dilemma. As you can imagine there were several guarded chuckles over this episode. Maggie had a great sense of humor and joined in the mirth.

All of the rooms in the apartment upstairs had ten foot ceilings. Periodically, Mother would have them repainted or wallpapered. The man who did this job was French Kirkpatrick. He would sometimes bring his son Jimmy, who was my age, and we would play together while he worked. He made his own wallpaper paste from flour and water. The ceiling would usually be of one color and would extend down the wall for about eighteen inches at which point a border would be placed to join the wall color to the ceiling. I was always interested in watching people who worked with their hands and enjoyed such activity myself in my later life.

I particularly liked to just sit and listen to the talk between the customers and the clerks. People weren't in as much of a hurry as they seem to be today and a trip to the store was a chance to visit and talk. I learned a great deal about the various vocations of the customers from them and also much about the daily goings on in the community. In the same vein, my Mother and Aunt Mae would entertain various church groups such as the Ladies Aid Society and the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union). I preferred the Ladies Aid Society because they always served refreshments. Children at that time were to be seen and not heard so I was all ears and little mouth, but I could always slip off and go to bed when I became bored.

On the river side of the store was a two story room attached to the wareroom just back of the main store room. Cardboard boxes and other burnable trash was thrown into the downstairs of this room. There was a door on the river side of this room and the trash would be taken out periodically and burned on the river bank. The EPA would have loved this.

The store would occasionally become infested with rats and mice, particularly in those

parts of the warerooms which contained feed and flour. When the stocks would get low Emerson would bring Carman's little dog named Patsy to the store and clean those particular warerooms. Patsy would watch as sacks were moved and pounce on any mice or rats uncovered. Another effective method for the rats was after the store closed at night. Emerson would take the 410 gauge pistol which had belonged to my Dad and a flashlight and go into the warerooms hunting rats. The rafters showed scars from the number 6 shot used in this endeavor. When I was in high school I would often do this hunting after coming home at night, waking up my Mother who would shout down the grate asking what I was doing. She patiently allowed me my fun. I learned the principles of wing shooting doing this as you had to lead the rats as they raced across the rafters. Mr. Viers had his little finger bitten by a mouse and as a result it became infected and had to be removed.

We did keep cats to help in curbing the mouse population. As could be expected the female cats would have kittens. They were wild as could be but Lois and I would tame them and had pets. But never in the apartment.

Christmas was a special time for me in the store. All of the toys would be put out on display and on Sundays and after the store was closed I would examine all of them, being very careful not to harm any of them. One year my Mother bought some BB guns to sell. I could not resist the temptation to give them a try. Aiming at a large cardboard Santa Claus I let off a few rounds and was surprised to hear glass breaking. The shot went through the cardboard and through the window in the grocery section. This terminated the sale of BB guns and my shooting. One very special memory I have was of the serenading of my Mother at Christmas by the Black Church choirs singing Christmas Carols. She would always

wake me up and take me to the window under which they were singing and we would listen in awe and wonder. I can still hear the beautiful soprano voice of Rosie Jones and the rich bass voice of Walter Tibbs. This was the most wonderful gift that I can remember ever receiving.

In the year following my Father's death the store caught on fire. Luckily it was during the daytime and we were all sent out. I was sent up to Mr. Viers' house which was only a couple hundred yards north of the store on 219. The fire started apparently in the radio repair room and was quickly extinguished. The local fire department consisted of a hose cart pulled by firemen, however they were able to put out the fire. Paul Overholt was the fire chief at that time. A few years later the department got their first fire truck, a Model A Ford. I remember seeing them in the truck from out of the store window practicing a fire drill. As to the store, a considerable amount of damage occurred and we were unable to return until repairs were made. Uncle Lloyd Davis lived next door to the store and offered us shelter until we could return. While we were living there all of us children came down with the mumps. Not simultaneously, but one after the other. We were a strange sight to behold with our swollen jaws but we all recovered without harm. The radio room was destroyed as was the garage adjoining it. Repairs were made and we soon moved back above the store. My Aunt Mabel was quite disturbed because one of the firemen had thrown her cedar chest out of the upstairs window causing a great deal of damage to it. Mr. Harvey Bright repaired it for her and her dismay was alleviated

Music was a large part of our family's life. Whenever we would take trips in the car it was always with much singing. I was told that my Father used to put Frances up on the counter to sing for customers. My four oldest sisters formed a quartet and sang together

for several years. They were invited to sing at several festivities around the region and once sang for Eleanor Roosevelt at one of her housing dedications. They all played the piano with Margaret and Frances having the most technique. Frances also took lessons on the violin from one of the local high school teachers. Her violin was bought from Edmund Hammons and was judged to be a superior instrument by later instructors. In the summers during the late 1930's they went to a music camp at Lake Chautauqua, New York. Emerson Sharp drove them in Mother's car and Carman and I went along on one trip and got to see Lake Erie and Niagara Falls. As a result of their experience the four of them decided to go to Philadelphia to study and perform. Margaret married their voice teacher and accompanied him in his music lessons. Frances studied piano and taught at Friend Central School. On her return to Marlinton for visits she would play the numbers she was working on for recitals. As a result I was able to hear much of the piano literature and became familiar with the various composers. Margaret had taught school at Marlinton High previous to Philadelphia and also taught piano lessons. She talked me into taking piano for about one year but I succumbed to the teasing of my boy friends and quit. I did play in one recital and I still know the little piece that I played. I have regretted quitting many times since. In 1938 I purchased my first trumpet for $10.95 from Montgomery Wards. I entered the first Marlinton High School Band in 1939 under the direction of Mr. William Powell. This started my life in the direction of music and after graduating from West Virginia University I married Peggy Coleman and returned to Marlinton High School as Band Director, a position I held until 1967.

When my sisters would be home on vacation they would practice their voice exercises or vocalizing as it was called. This amused those customers who happened to be in the store and evoked remarks such as "Who's killing that cat?" and "Won't someone help that girl?"

I knew what was going on but wouldn't take up for them.

On top of the hill behind what is now the Little General Store lived a family by the name of Hill. Mr. Hill was a school teacher and he and his wife had five daughters. One daughter by the name of Stella worked for my Father as a bookkeeper and stenographer. She often would take lunch meals with us and stayed with the store after my Father's death until she married Elmer Brown and moved to the Renick Valley. On several occasions our family would climb the hill and meet the Hill family at their spring and cook breakfast. We would have bacon and eggs, and fried apples, coffee, and hot bread. This was a special treat for me as they were on my turf on the hill where I and my friends often played.

Our sun parlor had windows on three sides and was an excellent place to sit and see what was going on in the streets. The front porch faced the river and also afforded a view of main street. The porch was outfitted with a half dozen large rocking chairs and a long porch swing. The swing was a popular spot for my sisters and their boyfriends when they came on dates. The Pocahontas County Fair was still operating in my early years and one of the favorite things to watch for was the carnival train with all of the red colored wagons hauling the carnival rides and sideshows. Carman and I used to watch for the train's arrival and then hang out of the windows of the store excitingly watching the wagons being hauled to the Fairgrounds. Carman worked with the horsemen some during the Fair week, an experience which I envied. It was a sad day for us boys when the fair was discontinued. The porch likewise provided some exciting scenes. I remember the hospital fire which destroyed the entire structure. The hospital had large dormer windows on the southern side which when the flames reached their height came alive with fire and tumbled down into Main

Street. It was spectacular to behold and taught me the tremendous power of fire. Another spectacular event was the breaking up of the ice on the Greenbrier River and the grinding and crashing of it as it went down the river. Quite often this happened at night and my family would go out on the porch to watch the spectacle. The river quite often would freeze completely from bank to bank and people would skate and play hockey on it. The old concrete bridge bore scars on the piers from the ice rammed against it. The porch provided a good view of the bridge and main street. After the CCC camps opened on Saturday nights the boys would ride trucks to town for an evening. They would park at the Toll House and the guys would head over town for some entertainment. About midnight they would return to the Toll House to be returned to camp. I could hear them from my bedroom laughing and joking as they loaded up.

Just north of the store was a blacksmith shop run by Mr. Dilley and his son Vince. This was quite an interesting experience for us boys to watch these men shoe horses and make iron tools on the forge and anvil. It became particularly exciting when a team of horses decided that they had enough of this foolishness and took off up the road at a gallop with the Dilleys running after them.

On occasion in the summer the entire staff of the store and station would go together and have a picnic. All their several family members would go and we would cook hamburgers and hotdogs and sit around the fire and talk and share our lives. All of the employees seemed like family to me and in reality were as close as family. This was a most memorable experience.

In the early afternoon of December 7, 1941 Emerson Sharp came up the back stairs from the store, burst in and said, "The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor, it's on the radio." We rushed to the radio and got the news. It was the general consensus that the war wouldn't last long as

the United States was so powerful. Little did we know. Little did I realize that this would be the beginning of the end of the big general store that I had learned to love. Progress would do away with the demand for many of the products that the store once carried. Specialized stores such as the A&P, the auto stores, building supplies with chain store connections would make it nearly impossible for independent general stores to survive. The warerooms that once were full of merchandise gradually over the years emptied. My Mother continued to run the store and filling station but the store changed, becoming more specialized in dry goods and gift items with less groceries, hardware, and building supplies. The era of the big general store was over.

The store didn't die a sudden death after World War II but continued to survive with changes brought about by what is generally called progress. Mr. Emerson Sharp was one of the first employees to leave, taking a better paying job at the Tannery. Clarence Carpenter replaced him for a number of years, followed by Boyd Dilley. My Uncle Lloyd grew older and retired. Eula Viers Moses was hired as a clerk and served several years. The store passed out of the Brill hands after the death of my Mother at age 80 in 1970. Curtis Pyles replaced Mr. Dilley after he left to take employment at the new Foodland. Curtis, or Gomer, as we called him, purchased the store in 1972 from our family and ran it for a few years until he sold it to Sherman Gibson. Sherman ran the store until the flood of 1985 at which time the Greenbrier River entered the main part of the store for the first time in its history. During the last few years of my Mother's proprietorship both Mr. Viers and Mr. Curtis passed away. For me this marked the end of the store as I had known it. After the flood of 1985, the store itself became old and passed away under the tools of the dismantlers. This time an era had really ended and the store was put to rest permanently.

At this time I believe that there are only three businesses remaining in the main part of

town that were in existence during the period of this narrative. These are the C. J. Richardson Hardware, the Marlinton Electric, and the venerable Pocahontas Times. The Richardson's Hardware still has the general appearance that it has always had and maintains the clerk-customer relationship that has marked it through the years. It is this charm that makes it successful. This is the case also with the Pocahontas Times. The Marlinton Electric has survived because it adjusted to the times with the increasing demand for energy. The closest thing we have to the old general store is the giant WalMart but it lacks the closeness of community ties that marked the general store and its clientele.

Some brief history notes:

Ira Donovan Brill born February 2, 1887 was the son of Reverend James W. and Fannie B. Brill of Hampshire County. Reverend Brill was a minister in the United Brethren Church. After graduating from Dunsmore Business College in Staunton, Virginia, Mr. Brill came to Pocahontas County as bookkeeper for the Campbell Lumber Company. He took over as manager for the commissaries of the company located on Williams River, moving the stores several times as the lumber camps changed. In 1911 he purchased a house on lower 2nd Avenue in Marlinton from Andy Thomas for $1800. Later that year he rented it for the sum of $17 a month. He courted Miss Lura Moore daughter of John S. and Elizabeth Moore during this time often riding a speeder from the lumber camps into town. They frequently attended events at the Opera House and roller skated there also. On June 5, 1912 they were married and lived in a lumber camp on Williams River where their first child, Margaret, was born July 17, 1913 with the assistance of a midwife. In 1914 they moved to Campbelltown where Mr. Brill was

manager of the Campbell Lumber Company store. The Campbell Lumber Company closed operations shortly thereafter and Brill bought the remaining merchandise with the idea of opening his own store. He and his brother-in-law S.J. Rexrode bought the lot where the store was built from C. J. Richardson in 1915 for $1,000. The Brills moved to the house previously bought on 2nd Avenue where the second child, Frances, was born on July 27, 1915. The third child, Catherine Sue Brill was born December 31, 1917. The Rexrodes lived in the apartment until 1919 when Mr. Brill bought out Rexrode's share and moved his family into the apartment. Later that year Mr. Brill bought the lot where the filling station was later built from Preston Curry for $600. Milly Brill was born December 7, 1919, Lois Brill was born August 31, 1923, and Sam was born on July 11, 1925. Grandfather Moore died in 1917 and Grandmother Moore lived with our family until her death in 1944. Aunt Mabel Hudson, as noted above, lived with our family from 1931 until her death in 1986 and performed a most valuable service to the family after my father's death.